

Why Reflections Matters



Rebekah Pitts
Utah PTA Reflections Chair



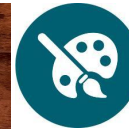
"Every artist was first an amateur."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

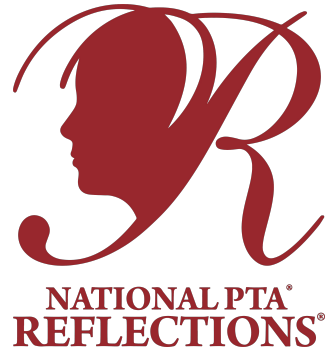


TOPICS COVERED IN THIS SESSION

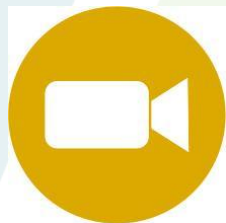
1. New Reflections Grant
2. Benefits of Reflections/Arts to individuals and communities
3. Personal stories of the impact of Reflections



BUT FIRST - What is Reflections?

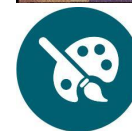


Reflections is a national PTA arts program that allows children from pre-K to grade 12 to create art in one, or more, of 7 categories, focusing on interpreting a yearly theme. Reflections was founded by Colorado PTA president Mary Lou Anderson in 1969. The first theme was “Children and Youth, Mirror their World”. The categories were Literature, 2D Visual Arts, and Music Composition.



2026-2027 Reflections Grant Launch

- Purpose of grant
- Criteria/How to apply
- Application details



Purpose of Grant

The Utah PTA Reflections Grant is for PTA schools who want to start, bring back, or enhance the Reflections program at their school for the 2026-2027 school year. Up to 10 selected schools will receive \$200 each.



Criteria

The applicant must be a PTA in good standing with the following items in compliance: Current Bylaws, Current Paid Memberships, and compliance documents turned into Utah PTA. Completed applications must be submitted by deadline. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Apply by May 31st, 2026

Difference between Art Grant and Reflections Grant (art grant story)

How to Apply

Grant applications can be found online at:
<https://www.utahpta.org/reflections-start-grant>



Grant Questions

Name, Email, PTA Position, School and City

Are you a PTA school?

Are you a title 1 school?

Is your school a BTS school?

Did your PTA offer Reflections for the 2025-2026 school year?



Grant Questions



If YES:

- What was your budget for Reflections for the 2025-2026 school year?
- How did you use your budget?
- How did you promote the program?
- How many entries did your school receive?
- How would you use an additional \$200 to grow your Reflections program for the upcoming year?
- What else would you like us to know?
- If your PTA is selected to receive a \$200 Reflections grant, you will be required to submit a summary of how you used the grant.

Grant Questions



If NO:

- When was the last time Reflections was offered at your school?
- Why did your PTA stop offering Reflections? Or why does your PTA not offer Reflections?
- If you received this grant, how would your PTA promote Reflections at your school for next year?
- How else would you plan to use the grant money for a Reflections program for your school?
- What else would you like us to know?

Marrie's Story- Midas Creek Elementary



For over a century, educators and researchers alike have recognized that the arts are more than enrichment, they are essential to learning. From music and drama to drawing and storytelling, artistic expression strengthens academic achievement, fosters creativity, enhances memory, and builds social-emotional skills. While many schools still debate whether the arts are optional, the research consistently demonstrates that they are central to student growth and success. -Waldorf in the News

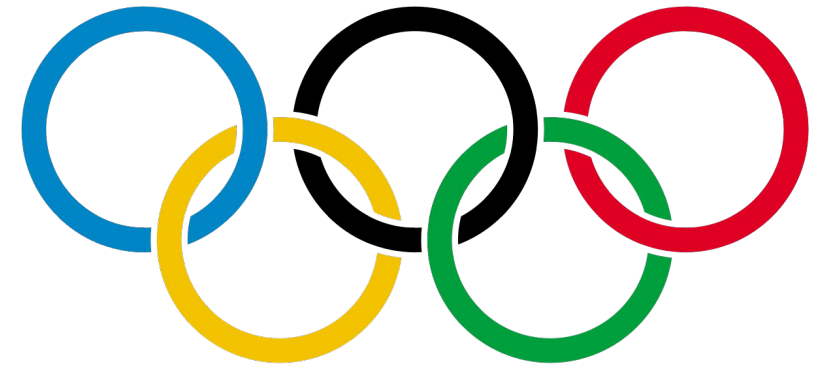
<https://www.waldorfeducation.org/science-of-arts-integration-student-success/?utm>





Noelle Pikus Pace

Olympic Medalist in Skeleton
and mother of 4 children who
participate in Reflections



Enhanced Cognitive Development Arts education stimulates the brain and promotes cognitive development in areas such as memory, spatial reasoning, and emotional intelligence. It also helps students learn to think outside of the box, which can be a valuable skill in many fields and professions.

<https://www.collegenp.com/career/arts-education-and-its-benefits-for-study-and-career?utm>



"Creativity takes courage."

-Henri Matisse

"It helped me make my creativity come to life and to not give up on things and it helped me look at life differently." -Samantha Da Silva



Izzy's Story



I will change the world by building connections with cultures, ethnicities, communities and so much more. I will do everything in my power to create harmony within humanity and welcome future generations without the discrimination people are often confronted with in today's world. The flowers seen in the painting represent the flourishing of the bonds I hope I will help people build together. My dream is to travel the world, learn about cultures, traditions, and meet people from all over the world.



Clara's Story



"Every child is an artist; the problem is how to remain an artist once they grow up " -Picasso

“Reflections has been such an uplifting and positive experience. I'm grateful for the continued support for our family and artistic development as a whole.” -parent of state winner





The Impact of a Music Education

“Music education strengthens IQ (intelligence quotient), academic performance, phonological skills, and the ability to hear speech in a noisy environment, and there is preliminary evidence that music education might facilitate foreign language learning. There are at least two mechanisms at play which could explain these results. Music may improve verbal skills (including reading, writing, and foreign language learning) via its facilitation of auditory skills. And music may stimulate IQ and academic performance because music education is a schoollike activity and thus may train school-like skills of concentration and reading of notation, which in turn could elevate IQ.”

Winner, E., T. Goldstein and S. Vincent-Lancrin (2013), Art for Art's Sake?: The Impact of Arts Education, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD

Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264180789-en>



Brita's Story



Tate's Story



“The Light Through the Window”



Chloe

The light shone through my window and warmed my bed. Outside, the birds were chirping peacefully. I snuggled deeper into my fuzzy bed, thinking about my mom and how she'd be outside in the warm sun. Now that I'm thinking of her, I feel sad and upset, like I'm different from everyone else.

Mom passed away three years ago, and now this beautiful scenery reminds me of her.. I lift the covers, and an immediate coldness washes over me and sinks into my bones. I head to the kitchen and sit down, the light pouring in and illuminating a plate filled with delicious food. The food was warm and tasty, but if I were in a better mood, it could have been even better. “Good morning, Chlo,” my Nana said. The reason I live with Nana is that my dad is always at work.

Morgan's Story

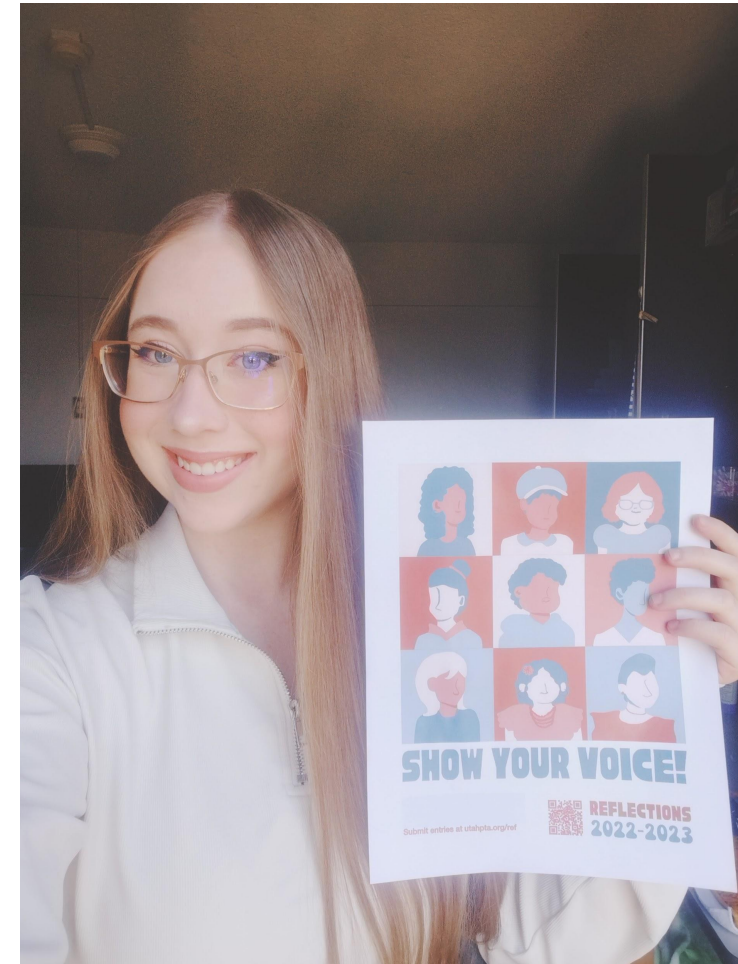


SHOW YOUR VOICE!

Submit entries at utahpta.org/ref



REFLECTIONS
2022-2023



Utah **PTA** LEADERSHIP CONVENTION 2026
together we lead



Dreams Unleashed

I am hopeful because of the beauty of nature. My art piece titled "Dreams Unleashed" depicts a natural mountainous landscape with a flowing waterfall made out of yarn. This artwork captures the essence of hope and optimism that can be found in the wonders of our environment. It is through nature's beauty that I find solace and inspiration, knowing that even in challenging times, there is always hope for a brighter future. I wanted to inspire others to appreciate and protect our environment, and show our interconnectedness through yarn art.



“Reflections has impacted my life because it feels amazing being here and it feels special being here.” -state winner

“Art is the stored honey of the human soul.”
Theodore Dreiser



Multi-arts Education

“An extensive body of correlational data in the United States reveals that students who participate in a large number of arts courses (these studies do not specify type of arts courses and are likely to be a mixture of kinds of arts courses) have higher educational attainment levels (as measured by grades in school and scores on verbal and mathematical standardised tests) than do those who take fewer or no arts courses, and one study showed that this relationship exists for students at both the high and low ends of the socio-economic spectrum.”

Winner, E., T. Goldstein and S. Vincent-Lancrin (2013). Art for Art's Sake?: The Impact of Arts Education, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264180789-en>



Jennifer's Story

Elena's Story



2019 Reflections Entry



At the State Capital for
Utah All-State High
School Art Show

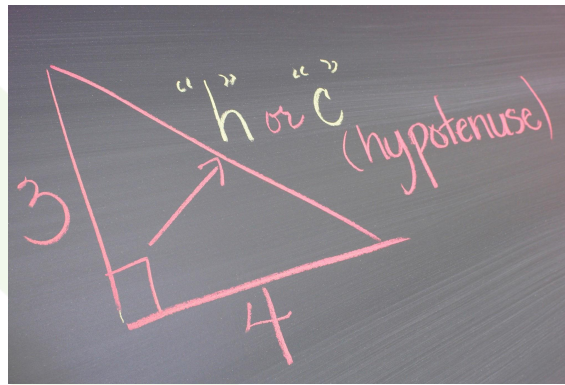


2025 Art Show Entry



Charlene's Story





“Two new correlational studies reveal that students who study the visual arts are stronger in geometrical reasoning than students who do not study the visual arts. And one experimental study found that learning to look closely at works of visual art seems to improve skills in observing scientific images – a typical instance of close skills transfer.”

Winner, E., T. Goldstein and S. Vincent-Lancrin (2013), Art for Art's Sake?: The Impact of Arts Education, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264180789-en>

Sheri's Story



1993

R REFLECTIONS Arts Competition

I Belong



Using the theme "I Belong" as inspiration, submit an original music composition (MP3 or WAV for audio) with a PDF score notation.

Submissions Due October 14th

Submit at www.utahpta.org/ref

Full Rules ➔ 





Sheri-Great Salt Lake





Utah ----- 2026 
PTA LEADERSHIP
CONVENTION 
together we lead

***“I saw the angel in the marble and
carved until I set him free”
-Michelangelo***

“Reflections makes me feel
awesome!” Alexis, age 6



The Impact of Arts Education

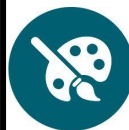
“Empirical studies show that students enrolled in arts education courses display a more ambitious attitude to academic work as well as higher levels of commitment and motivation.”

Winner, E., T. Goldstein and S. Vincent-Lancrin (2013), Art for Art's Sake?: The Impact of Arts Education, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264180789-en>

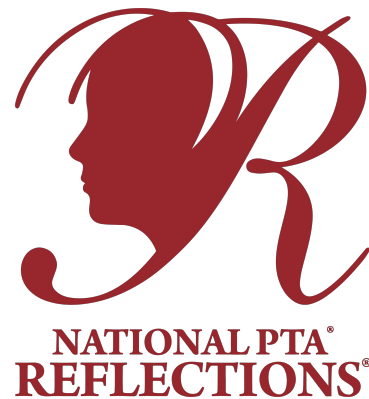




“I like sharing my ideas with other people. And I really like the awards. They make me feel special. And the cookies are really good at state.”
-Makai Pace



Defining Moment



“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.”

-Vincent Van Gogh

“It makes me feel happy” -Eloise



Kellen's Story



Sarah's Story



Just like the beautiful, exotic fall colors on the mountain, we are all different. We might feel that we are unlike and don't fit in, but when you see the full picture everyone together becomes something bigger and better. We can be so much more when we unite. All of live on the same earth so we should make sure no one is along and that they know that they belong. I can do this by just having a smile on my face spreading the fact that we all belong even though everyone is different.



Sarah's Story



Tynan's Story



“This is phenomenal. Like, freaking amazing. Well thought out interpretation of the theme that is beautifully represented in the artwork, well written artist statement and beautiful use of color to give it meaning. Thoughtful small details in the heart, stitches, veins, everything. I rarely score a piece so high!” - judge’s comment

“My daughter is in 4th grade and is severely dyslexic. Having the opportunity and experience of winning in the literature category is something that will be impactful for years to come!” -parent of state winner in Accessible Arts Division

"One of the basic rules of the universe is that nothing is perfect. Perfection simply doesn't exist.....Without imperfection, neither you nor I would exist"
-Stephen Hawking

Learning Every Day
by Elsie Brand

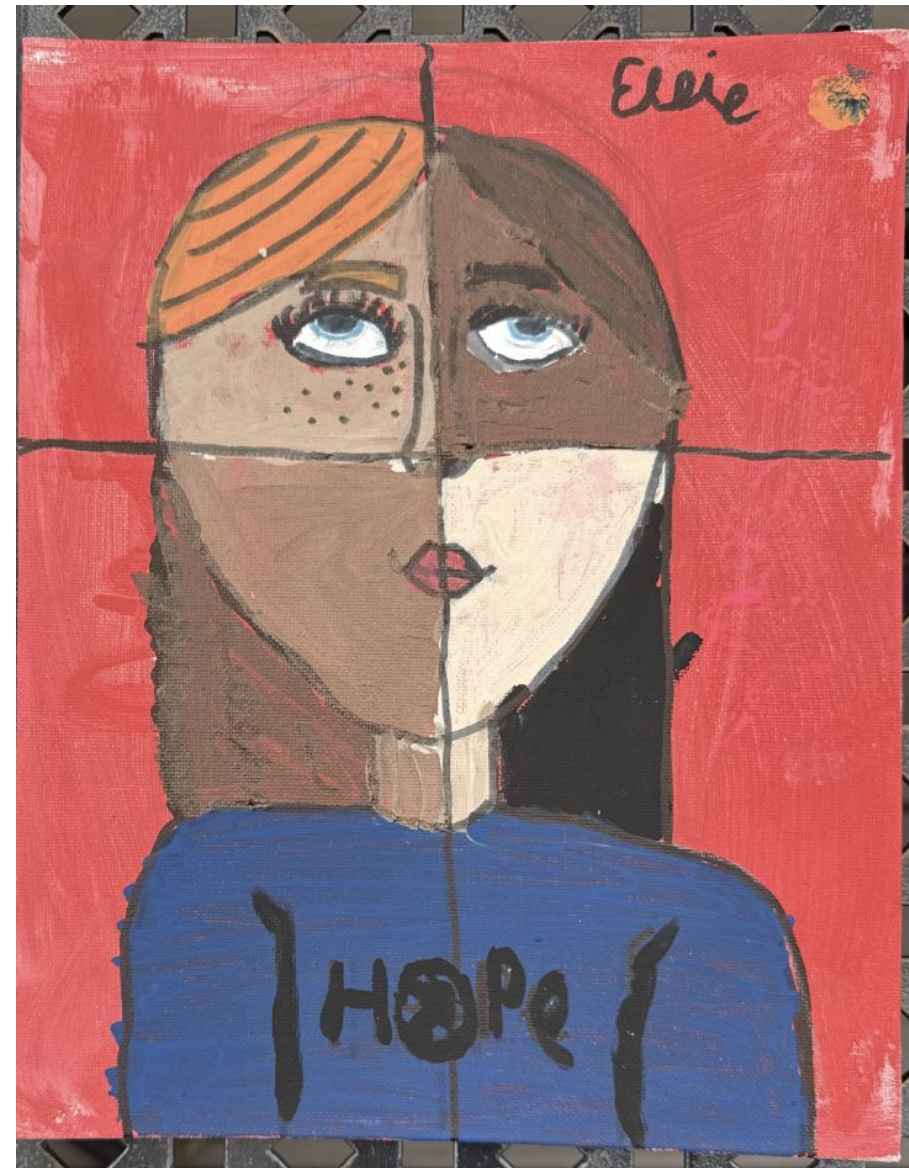
If you didn't know,
You belong with us.
We belong with you,
We share our trust.

We can do this!
We can work together,
Even though we all are different,
We can help each other.

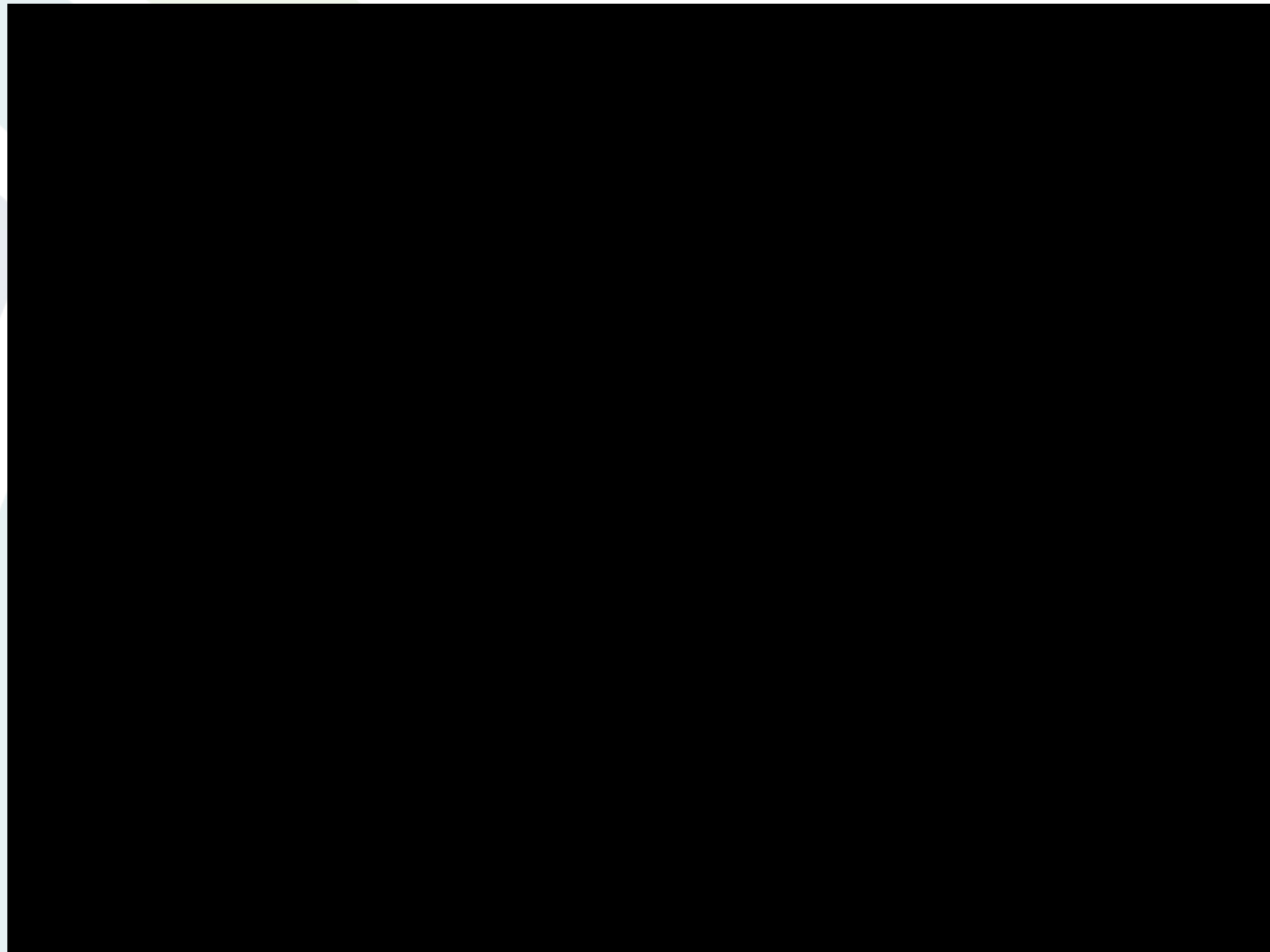
We can make others feel included here
we can help others overcome their fears.

Being different is good,
We learn from each other
because we're not the same.
We've all felt different,
We've all felt shame.

But we've learned we all are different,
and that's okay.
We're strong and we're happy,
We'll learn more every day.







National Reflections Outstanding Interpretation Award
Winner from Accessible Arts Division





Confidence

Ruth's Story



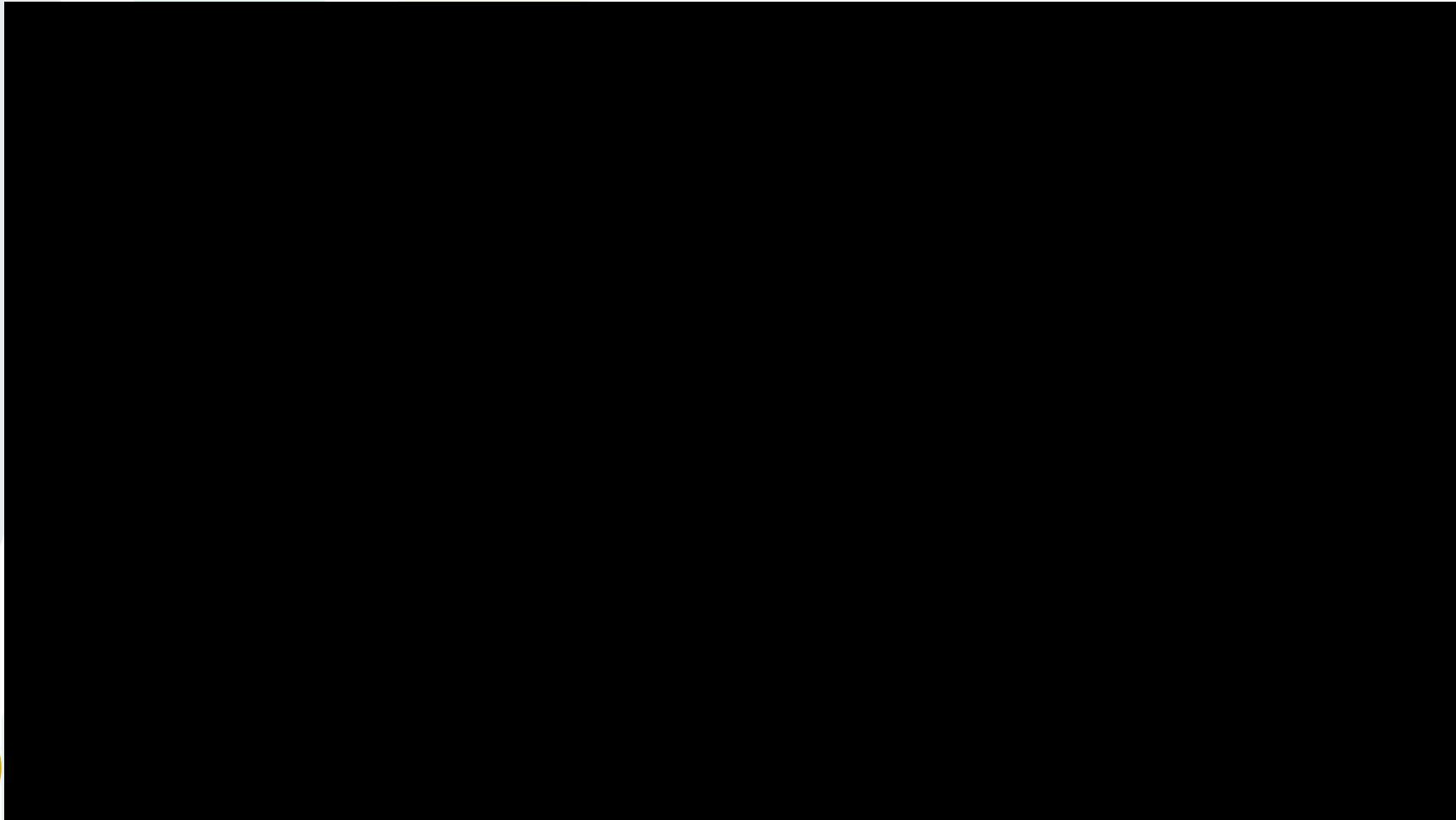


This Charcuterie board is kind of like life without all sizes and shapes it would be so boring. In this Charcuterie board everything is different. And when everything is different no one can judge you on what you are or want to be. When I think I don't belong I remember no one is perfect.

-Artist's Statement



Cheree's Story

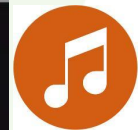


Finn Larson, film 2021

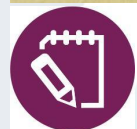




Jon Schmidt's Story



Sarah's Story





Boston's Story

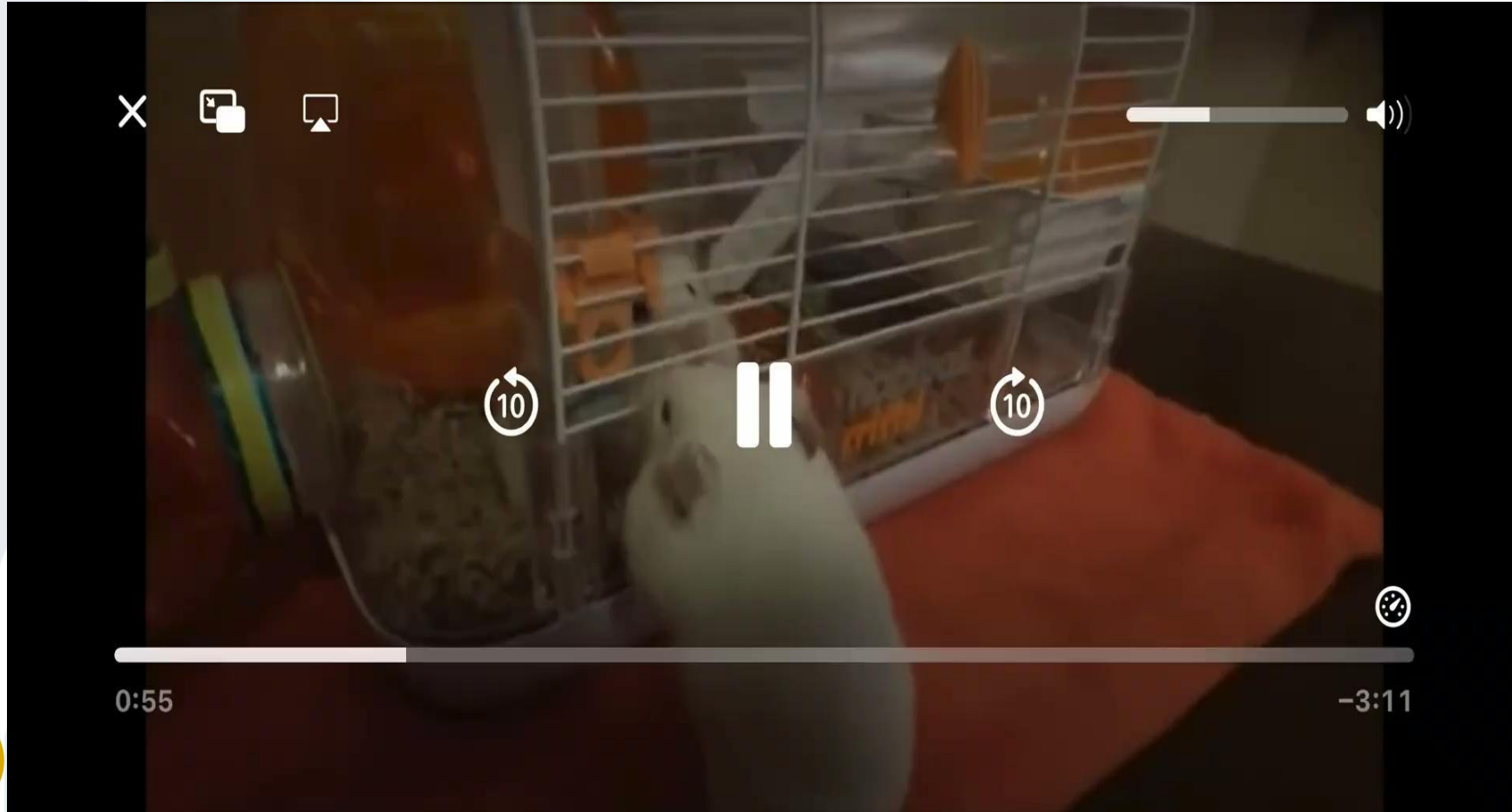


Boston's Story

“I am a blind DJ and music composer. This music is a mixture of drum-n-bass and 8-bit. I composed this song when I was feeling sad and really stressed, and it really made me feel better. I have a lot of music inside me. I hope I can help others feel happiness through my music. That is one way to show that I matter, by lifting others with my talents.”



Carson's Story



My son had a boost of confidence. To do an art that he enjoys and to be publicly rewarded was REALLY COOL. He has talked about it often and feels more and more eager for the next year. His creativity is more every year and leading up.
-name withheld

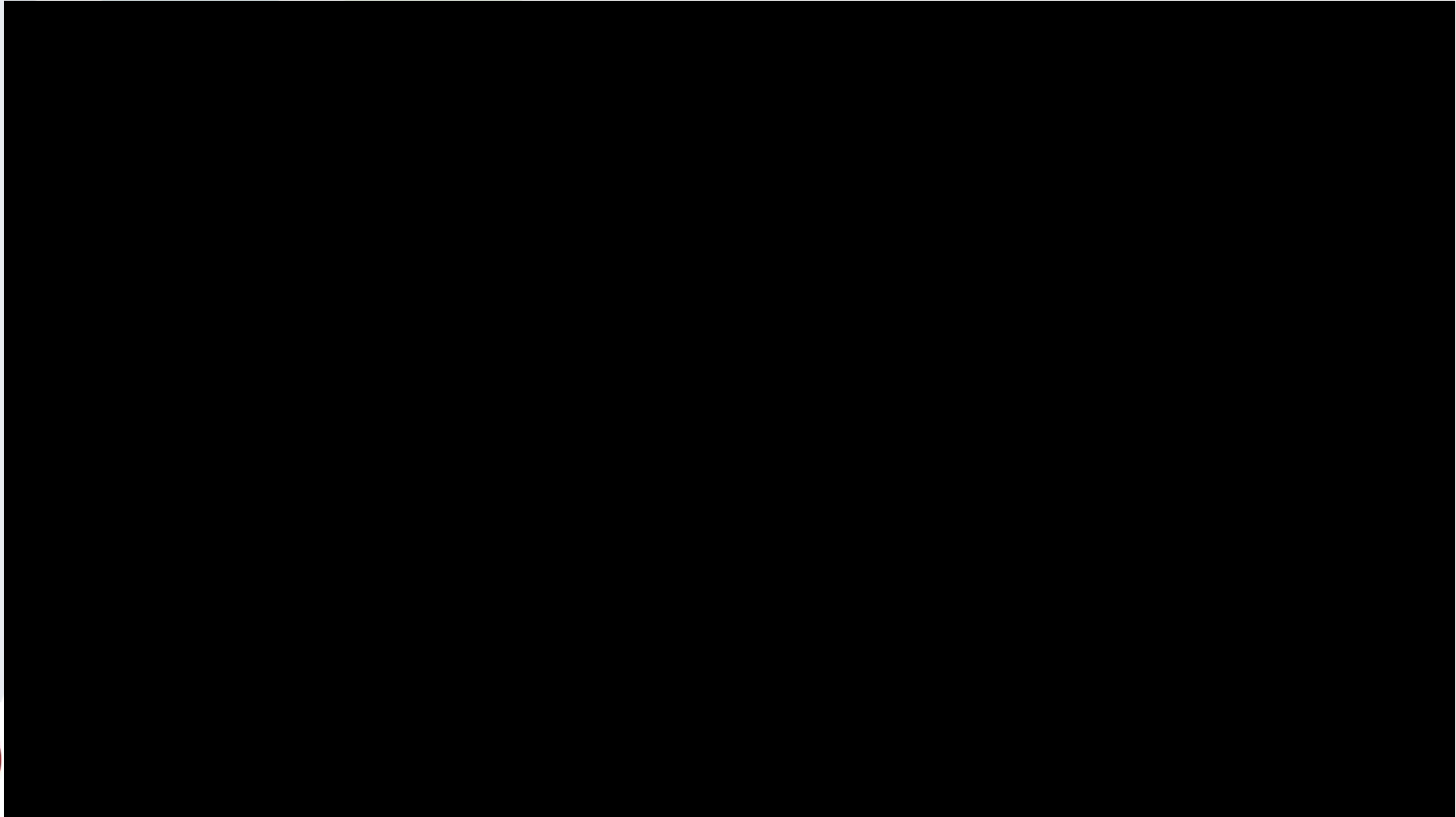
I've been the reflection specialist for the past 2 years and I've loved seeing the creativity and talent of the students who enter! I love that each year has a theme which helps students find purpose and connection for their pieces. -Carlee Richins





Bates Elementary

Audrey's Story



Jarrett's
Story -
Is 2 entries
worth it?



Jarrett's Story

We will not ask to belong.

We will prove it,

by existing,

by remaining,

by refusing to vanish.

We will be proof stronger than stone,

a chorus louder than silence,

a light no night can smother.

I belong.

You belong.

We belong.

And when that chorus roars—

the world will not just hear us.

It will have to rebuild itself around us.





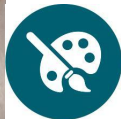
Mind of a Goldfish by Pashan MaCurdy

Artist Statement:

Sometimes we feel isolated in life, like a single goldfish in a bowl. Sometimes we feel like we have no one to turn to, except for maybe our pet goldfish. Even if it feels like that right now, know that there are people who want to know you, who want to care about you, you just haven't met them yet. So keep hoping, hold on, and keep reminding yourself "I Belong".

Additional Details:

Just my personal experience of finding where I belong: I've been doing theater for 7 years now but I didn't start theater at my high school until last year, and joining the fall musical last year changed my life. Through that show I discovered a group of friends who became my favorite people in the world. I grew exponentially as a person because of them, they taught me so much and I was happy! Because of theater I found the group where I belong and it's been such a blessing in my life. I also have a friend named Wade and there's this choir song "Wade in the Water" so obviously there were endless jokes connecting my friend and the song. Someone once got him a goldfish that was named Wade in the Water. And so this goldfish I've drawn is akin to Wade in the Water the goldfish.



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- Utah PTA Super Secondary
- Utah PTA Excellent Elementary
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- Utah PTA Reflections
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